

# TRIBUNE TOWER

435 NORTH MICHIGAN AVENUE  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

PRELIMINARY STAFF SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

Submitted to the

Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks

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TRIBUNE TOWER  
435 North Michigan Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois

Date of Construction: 1923-1925

Architects: Raymond M. Hood and John M. Howells

The Tribune Tower, designed by Raymond M. Hood and John Mead Howells, was the first-place winner in the *Chicago Tribune's* One Hundred Thousand Dollar Architectural Competition, announced on June 10, 1922. Colonel Robert R. McCormick, publisher of the *Tribune*, planned this international competition to coincide with the seventy-fifth anniversary of the *Chicago Tribune*. The design of the Tribune Tower was to accomplish a three-fold objective, as described in the introduction to the competition rules:

It coincided with the seventy-fifth anniversary of the *Chicago Tribune*, coming as a fitting commemoration of three-fourths of a century of amazing growth and brilliant achievement.

It had for its prime motive the enhancement of civic beauty; its avowed purpose was to secure for Chicago the most beautiful office building in the world.

It aimed to provide for the world's greatest newspaper a worthy structure, a home that would be an inspiration to its own workers as well as a model for generations of newspaper publishers.

The Tribune Tower has been an international symbol of the *Chicago Tribune* and the city of Chicago for over six decades. The *Chicago Tribune*, founded in 1847 and directed by Joseph Medill and his descendants in the Patterson and McCormick families for over one hundred and forty years, has contributed to the growth and development of the City of Chicago. The *Chicago Tribune*, with 15,000 employees and a current circulation of over two million newspapers daily, is one of the largest contributors to the economic base of

the city. The owners of the *Tribune*, through the Medill-Patterson-McCormick Trust, have supported numerous philanthropic endeavors in Chicago for many years.

### *History of the Chicago Tribune*

The city of Chicago, with a population of 350 citizens, was incorporated as a town in 1833. The first newspaper, the *Chicago Democrat* founded by John Calhoun, began publishing on a weekly basis the same year. The population of Chicago increased to over 4,000 by 1836, due to the start of construction of the Illinois and Michigan Canal. By 1840, the *Democrat* became a daily newspaper and was now under the direction of "Long John" Wentworth, later elected mayor of Chicago in 1857-58 and 1860-61. The substantial increase in population prompted the publication of many new newspapers, journals, and magazines. Subsequent to the *Democrat* came the *Chicago American*, a weekly in 1835, issued as a daily newspaper in 1839 and discontinued in 1842; the *Chicago Express*, a daily newspaper that began in October of 1842 and was discontinued two years later; the *Chicago Daily Journal*, which grew out of the *Express*; the *Chicago Republican*, a weekly, started in December, 1842, and discontinued after six months; the *Chicago Daily News*, also short lived, appeared from late in 1845 until January, 1846; the *Chicago Commercial Advertiser* began as a weekly in 1847 and continued until its expiration in 1853. With this rather discouraging newspaper history, the *Chicago Tribune* was started by Joseph K. C. Forrest, James J. Kelly, and John E. Wheeler in 1847. When the *Chicago Tribune* began publishing, its only competition was the *Chicago Daily Journal*. After the first issue was distributed on June 10, 1847, the *Journal* reviewed the *Tribune* with the following statement in its next issue:

*Chicago Daily Tribune*--A large and well-printed sheet with the above title was laid on our table this morning.

Our neighbors have launched their bark upon the stormy sea of editorial life, proposing to observe a strict impartiality. We wish them every success in their enterprise and firmly trust they will shun the rocks upon which so many gallant vessels have been wrenched.

The mechanical execution of the *Tribune* is beautiful and reflects great credit upon the art.

During its early years of development, the *Tribune* was owned by assorted partnerships which eventually moved on to other enterprises. In 1855 when Joseph Medill, a successful newspaper publisher from Cleveland, purchased an interest in the *Tribune* with Dr. Charles H. Ray of Galena the paper became the "Tribune family." Dr. Ray sold his share in 1863, and Medill became editor-in-chief. A new era began for the *Chicago Tribune* with the leadership of Joseph Medill. His reputation as a man with common sense, high values, and a vision for the future of the city of Chicago caused the citizens to view the new owner of the *Tribune* with an optimistic attitude. This was also the beginning of

family ownership of the *Tribune* which was to continue for the next 120 years. After the death of Joseph Medill in 1899, his son-in-law Robert W. Patterson became the editor-in-chief until his death. At the time of his death in 1910, the *Illinois State Journal* appraised his personality:

He realized that changes come slowly, that reform cannot be effected in a day, that patience is requisite to the accomplishment of any important fact. Better still, he appreciated the saving grace of good nature in the crusader. He seldom lost his temper, and defeat never ruffled him.

When Patterson's health began to fail, Medill McCormick, Joseph's grandson, became publisher. From 1911 to 1914, James Keely assumed complete editorial control of the paper. This is the only period in the early history during which a non-family member directed the newspaper. In 1914, Robert Rutherford McCormick and Joseph Medill Patterson, grandsons of Joseph Medill, became the editors and publishers of the *Chicago Tribune*. In 1919, the *Tribune* launched its tabloid pictorial morning newspaper, the *New York Daily News*. Patterson divided his time between Chicago and New York for the next five years, until the new paper became an unprecedented success requiring him to move permanently to New York. Colonel McCormick became the sole director and guiding force of the *Tribune* until his death in April, 1955. Walter Trohan, a employee of the *Chicago Tribune* for four decades, wrote this epitaph about Colonel McCormick for the Illinois Historical Society:

Certainly he had his idiosyncrasies, but they became our idiosyncrasies and we loved him for them, even when we smarted most under them. He was the greater editor for being human and having faults common to all. With all his faults he was a better editor and a better man than those who mocked and derided him.

After his death, the *Chicago Tribune* was directed by members of the McCormick-Patterson Trust. Through the eventual liquidation of the Trust in 1975, the *Tribune* is now under the leadership of its top executives as part of the Tribune Company, a diversified media company with major investments in newspaper publishing, television and radio broadcasting, entertainment production, and newsprint manufacturing. The company publishes daily newspapers in New York City, Fort Lauderdale, Orlando, and in two markets in California. Its broadcasting and entertainment group includes six independent television stations operating in New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, Denver, Atlanta and New Orleans, and five radio stations. The company produces nationally distributed news and entertainment programs for television, owns the Chicago Cubs baseball team, and operates a forest products business in Ontario and Quebec, Canada, of which the principal product is newsprint.

The *Tribune* was first published in the third-floor loft of a wooden building at the corner of Lake and LaSalle streets, one block west of Chicago's "busy corner" of that day which was Clark and Lake streets. On May 22, 1849, the building was destroyed by

fire, but the loss was fully covered by insurance and the *Tribune* missed only two days of publication, reopening above Gray's grocery, a frame building on the northwest corner of Clark and Lake streets. The next move, a year later, was to the Masonic Building, located at 173 Lake Street, which under the old street numbering system placed it only a few doors west of the original *Tribune* office. The *Tribune* remained there until 1852 when it moved to the Evans block, a three-story brick building erected by Dr. John Evans, later territorial governor of Colorado under President Lincoln. The newspaper occupied the second and third floors, remaining in this location during the Civil War. In 1868, a permanent building was erected at the southeast corner of Madison and Dearborn streets. This four-story building was constructed with Joliet limestone and was considered "fireproof," but three years later it was destroyed in the Chicago Fire of 1871. In 1872, the *Tribune* moved into a new five-story building on its old location which had been referred to as "Tribune Corner" since 1869. By 1902, the *Tribune* company had outgrown this building and a seventeen-story skyscraper was built on the same site but, within a few years, the unparalleled growth of the newspaper soon demanded new quarters. Between 1916 and 1920 a new press building, carefully planned by the newspaper's engineers, was constructed at the southeast corner of the block bounded by Hubbard, Illinois, and St. Clair streets and Michigan Avenue. Architect Jarvis Hunt designed the brick printing plant. The *Tribune* owned this property and the adjacent properties along Michigan Avenue. To coincide with the seventy-fifth anniversary of the *Chicago Tribune*, Colonel McCormick announced an international competition to design a monumental building for "The World's Greatest Newspaper." The objectives of the selection jury were stated in the competition instructions:

It cannot be reiterated too emphatically that the primary objective of the *Chicago Tribune* in instituting this Competition is to secure the design for a structure distinctive and imposing—the most beautiful office building in the world.

The new building would be connected to the printing plant, but it would also occupy a prominent position on the developing Michigan Avenue.

#### *Tribune Tower: Twentieth-Century American Gothicism*

In observance of its seventy-fifth anniversary, the *Chicago Tribune* on June 10, 1922, announced an international competition for a new building it planned to build on a site on the east side of Michigan Avenue, just north of the river and adjacent to its six-story printing plant which had been built in 1920. The competition generated interest among architects throughout the world, and several who were, or were later to become, important in the development of modern architecture submitted entries, including Walter Gropius, Walter Burley Griffin, and Adolf Loos. Approximately ninety percent of the entries relied on historical precedent, with about forty percent inspired by Beaux-Arts ideals and almost twenty percent employing Gothic forms. The competition entries represent a unique compendium of the major trends in architecture during the ear-

ly 1920s.

The jury consisted of *Tribune* owners Colonel Robert R. McCormick and Captain Joseph Patterson and executives Edward S. Beck and Holmes Onderdonk, and Chicago architect Alfred Granger. By November 23, one week before the winners were to be announced, the more than 250 entries had been narrowed down to 12, but on November 29, an entry arrived from Eliel Saarinen in Finland which the judges believed had to be included among the finalists. On December 3, 1922, the winners were announced. First prize was awarded to Raymond M. Hood and John Mead Howells of New York for their Gothic design; second prize went to Saarinen whose entry was to exert a strong influence on skyscraper design during the late 1920s; and third prize was given to Holabird and Roche for their Gothic entry.

Although the Hood and Howells design was at the time lavishly overpraised by some, such as Alfred Granger, and too vehemently condemned by others, notably Louis Sullivan, it is clear that the Tribune Tower is one of America's finest Gothic skyscrapers. The Gothic style had a long tradition in skyscraper design; the vertical emphasis of the style had early been considered an appropriate expression of the height of multi-story structures. One prototypical skyscraper, the Jayne Building in Philadelphia, had employed Gothic forms and details as early as 1851. D. H. Burnham and Company used Gothic details in its otherwise "modern" Fisher Building of 1896 (designated a Chicago Landmark on June 7, 1978). The style, however, did not become widely popular for tall office buildings until Cass Gilbert's Woolworth Building was completed in New York in 1913. Because it was the tallest building in the world at the time, the Woolworth attracted considerable attention, and during the decade after its completion Gothic skyscrapers were built throughout the country. As the entries in the *Tribune* competition demonstrate, the style could be applied to tall buildings either with sensitivity and finesse or with heavy-handedness and little skill. Few examples equal the Tribune Tower in meticulous detail or superb proportion.

### *The Design of the Tribune Tower*

The Tribune Tower rises thirty-six stories above Michigan Avenue. At its base, it extends 100 feet along Michigan Avenue and 136 feet west of the avenue where it adjoins the 1920 printing plant. The tower effect is created by a series of setbacks, the first of which occurs above the third floor. At the twenty-first floor, the westernmost portion of the building ends and the tower becomes square in plan. Above the twenty-fourth floor, the main shaft of the building is topped by an octagonal tower which is stepped back slightly at the thirty-third and thirty-fourth floors. On each side of the building, two prominent piers continue above the twenty-fourth floor in the form of flying buttresses, a distinctive feature derived from the south tower of Rouen Cathedral.

The steel frame of the building is sheathed in gray Indiana limestone carved extensively at the top and bottom in Gothic forms. At the base is a monumental three-story

arched entranceway containing a richly detailed stone screen above the two doors. Gothic screens frame the windows of the fourth floor where the first setback occurs. A richly carved screen provides a transition between the square main block and the octagonal tower. The greatest concentration of Gothic detail occurs on the tower itself. Between the base and the tower, the intermediate floors are treated uniformly, with continuous piers and mullions separating vertical bands of windows to emphasize the verticality of the structure.

The lobby is located on the first floor of the Tribune Tower, with the main entrance on the west side of the building fronting on Michigan Avenue. The lobby consists of a vestibule, entrance lobby, and two elevator halls leading to five elevators in each hall, as illustrated in the shaded areas of the enclosed plan of the first floor. The entrance lobby and elevator hall walls are covered with cream-colored travertine marble. The ceiling of the entrance lobby is paneled and raftered with large oak beams. A balcony of carved oak hangs below a clock affixed to a intricately designed stone screen on the west wall. The figures in the carved stone screen represent the tree of life with characters from the fables of Aesop. The Gothic detailing of the building's exterior is reproduced in the carved oak panels above the entrances to the elevator halls and throughout the lobby area. The lobby is illuminated by three bronze chandeliers suspended from the ceiling. The walls and floors are incised with inscriptions that express the ideals and obligations of the journalistic community as interpreted by the *Chicago Tribune*. On the south wall of the lobby is a bronze plaque commemorating the 268 *Chicago Tribune* employees who served in World War I. On the north wall of the lobby is another plaque honoring the 876 employees who served in World War II.

#### *The Architects of the Tribune Tower*

Raymond Mathewson Hood was born in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, on March 21, 1881. Hood studied at Brown University for a year before transferring to the architectural department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. After graduation he accepted a position with the Boston firm of Ralph Cram, Bertram G. Goodhue and Frank W. Ferguson as an architectural draftsman. In 1905, Hood began the course in architecture at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. He returned to the United States in 1906 and worked briefly with Cram, Goodhue, and Ferguson, next joining the Pittsburgh firm of Henry Hornbostel. In 1908 he went back to Paris, completing his studies for the degree of *Architecte Diplome par le Gouvernement Francaise* in 1910. For the following three years, he worked at the Hornbostel office where he worked on plans for the New York State Education Building at Albany and buildings for the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh. In 1914, Hood moved to New York City to establish an architectural firm. The following six years included few large architectural projects, due to the United States' participation in World War I. Hood and J. Andre Fouilhoux became partners on various building projects and, in 1922, they were invited by John Mead Howells to assist in preparing plans for the international competition to design the Chicago Tribune Tower.

Hood and Howells won the first place prize among over 250 entries for having designed "a structure distinctive and imposing—the most beautiful office building in the world" as stated as one of the objectives of jury members. After this professional recognition, a multitude of mainly commercial commissions were given to Hood between 1924 and 1933. Hood designed numerous other buildings in collaboration with Howells. They include Apartment House No. Three in New York, Joseph M. Patterson House in Ossining, New York, Daily News Building in New York, and, in 1935, the WGN Studio building addition adjacent to the Tribune Tower on its north side. The following buildings were either designed by Hood or by Hood in association with other architects: American Radiator Building in New York; Saint Vincent de Paul Asylum (with J. Andre Fouilhoux), Tarrytown, New York; Bethany Union Church in Chicago; National Broadcasting Company Studios in New York; National Radiator Building (with J. Gordon Reeves) in London; Masonic Temple and Scottish Rite Cathedral (with Frederick Godley, Fouilhoux, and H.V.K. Henderson) in Scranton, Pennsylvania; McGraw-Hill Building (with Godley and Fouilhoux) in New York; Beaux Arts Apartments (with Kenneth M. Murchison, Godley, and Fouilhoux) and Rex Cole Showrooms in Flushing and Bay Ridge, New York. In 1930, Hood, Godley and Fouilhoux were one of the three architectural firms chosen to work together to develop the design for Rockefeller Center, under the name of the Associated Architects. Hood was one of the original nationally known architects selected for the Architectural Commission of the Chicago Century of Progress World's Fair of 1933. General Electric commissioned Hood to design the General Electric Pavilion for the fair. Hood died in 1934 at the age of fifty-three.

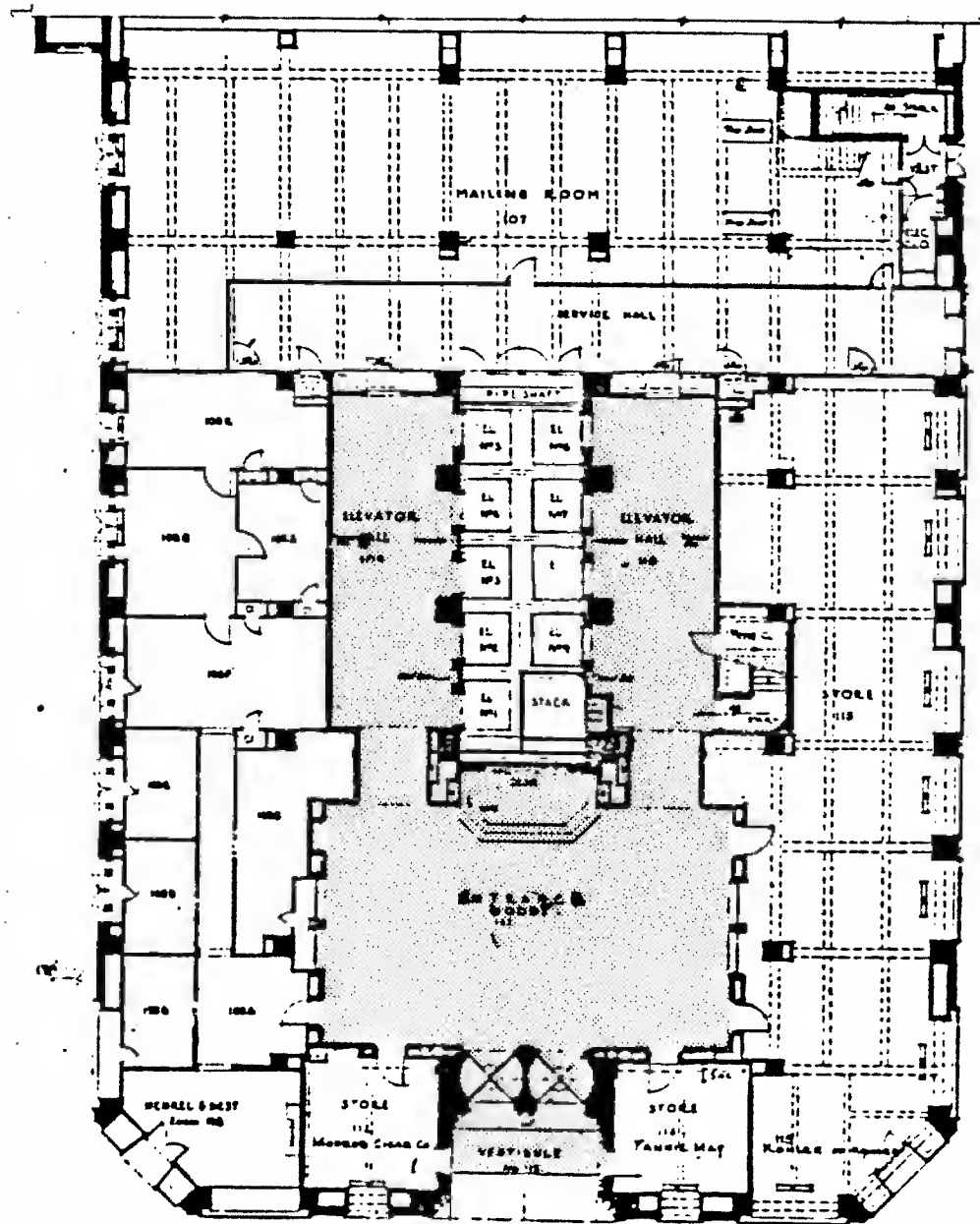
John Mead Howells was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1868. After graduating from Harvard University in 1891, he attended the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Howells received a French Government diploma in 1897. Upon his return to New York a partnership was formed with a former college classmate, architect I.N. Phelps Stokes. During the ensuing twenty years, Howells and Stokes designed a number of churches, colleges, and commercial structures. Notable examples of these were Woodbridge Hall at Yale University; St. Paul's Chapel at Columbia University; and Paint Hall, the music school at Harvard. They also prepared plans for the First Congregational Church at Danbury, Connecticut; Stock Exchange Building in Baltimore; Royal Insurance Company buildings in Baltimore and San Francisco; Turks Head Office Building, Providence, Rhode Island; American Geographic Society Building, New York; University Settlement House, and several apartment houses and model tenements in Manhattan. Howells served on the National Fine Arts Commission under Presidents Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt. After World War I he went to Belgium at the request of President Hoover, then the chairman of the Commission for Relief in Belgium Educational Foundation, to take charge of the construction of new buildings for the University of Brussels. In 1922, Howells and Raymond M. Hood won the international competition for the design of the Chicago Tribune Tower. Howells collaborated with Raymond M. Hood on many other commercial buildings as described previously. Other designs of Howells include Beekman Tower (originally the Panhellenic Hotel) in 1928 and the Title Guarantee and Trust Company completed in 1930, both located in New York. Howells was considered an authority on early American architecture, publishing many articles in *Harper's*, *The*



*Century*, and architectural periodicals. He participated in the preservation and restoration of colonial buildings, especially in the vicinity of Portsmouth, New Hampshire and Charleston, South Carolina. He died on September 23, 1959 at the age of ninety-one.

The Tribune Tower was designed to maximize the sheer visual pleasure in the structure and the constantly changing environment around and within the building. The original 1920s printing plant building at the rear of the Tribune Tower was extensively enlarged and altered in 1948 and the original brick south wall refaced in cut bedford limestone in 1965 during the construction of the adjoining Pioneer Court. In 1981, when the *Tribune's* production and circulation departments were moved to the new Freedom Center, located at Chicago Avenue and the Chicago River, the lower floors of the building became vacant. This space is now part of an interior remodeling program to make available rental space for commercial tenants. A refurbishing program of the lobby area is now being undertaken. The carved oak information desk will be reproduced from original shop drawings of the 1923 plan. The original light fixtures are to be refurbished and the marble cleaned. The original finish on the decorative metal elevator doors will be recreated. The exterior architecture of the Tower remains virtually intact, possessing a high degree of integrity.

In 1925, with the completion of the Tribune Tower, the owners of the *Tribune* felt they had achieved a corporate symbol for the newspaper and a centrally located headquarters for the extensive equipment and increasing number of employees that were needed to produce a rapidly expanding newspaper. The Gothic design of the Tribune Tower was part of the architectural transition taking place during the 1920s, from the use of historical styles in favor of a progressively developing "modern" style. Dramatically sited where Michigan Avenue crosses the Chicago River, the Tribune Tower is part of a magnificent group of four buildings that demonstrate this architectural transition. The three other buildings erected during this period are: the historically-derived Wrigley Building, the 360 North Michigan Building representing Beaux-Arts classicism, and 333 North Michigan in the Art Deco style. The Tribune Tower and the three 1920s skyscrapers are all oriented toward the river; they bound the Michigan Avenue Bridge and define one of Chicago's finest urban spaces. Here, Michigan Avenue opens into the broad expanse of river and lake on the one side and on the other the river angles southwest, providing a panorama of the buildings along the riverfront. Few urban vistas in this country are as spectacular or incorporate such monuments of 1920s skyscraper design. The evolution of the *Chicago Tribune*, the Medill, Patterson and McCormick families and the Tribune Tower all coincide with the historical, cultural, and economic heritage and development of the City of Chicago.



**FIRST FLOOR**

TRIBUNE TOWER

Shaded areas: Vestibule, Entrance Lobby and Elevator Halls are to be included in the proposed designation

*OPPOSITE:*

The Tribune Tower as it's location relates to the Wrigley Building, the Michigan Avenue Bridge and the Chicago River.

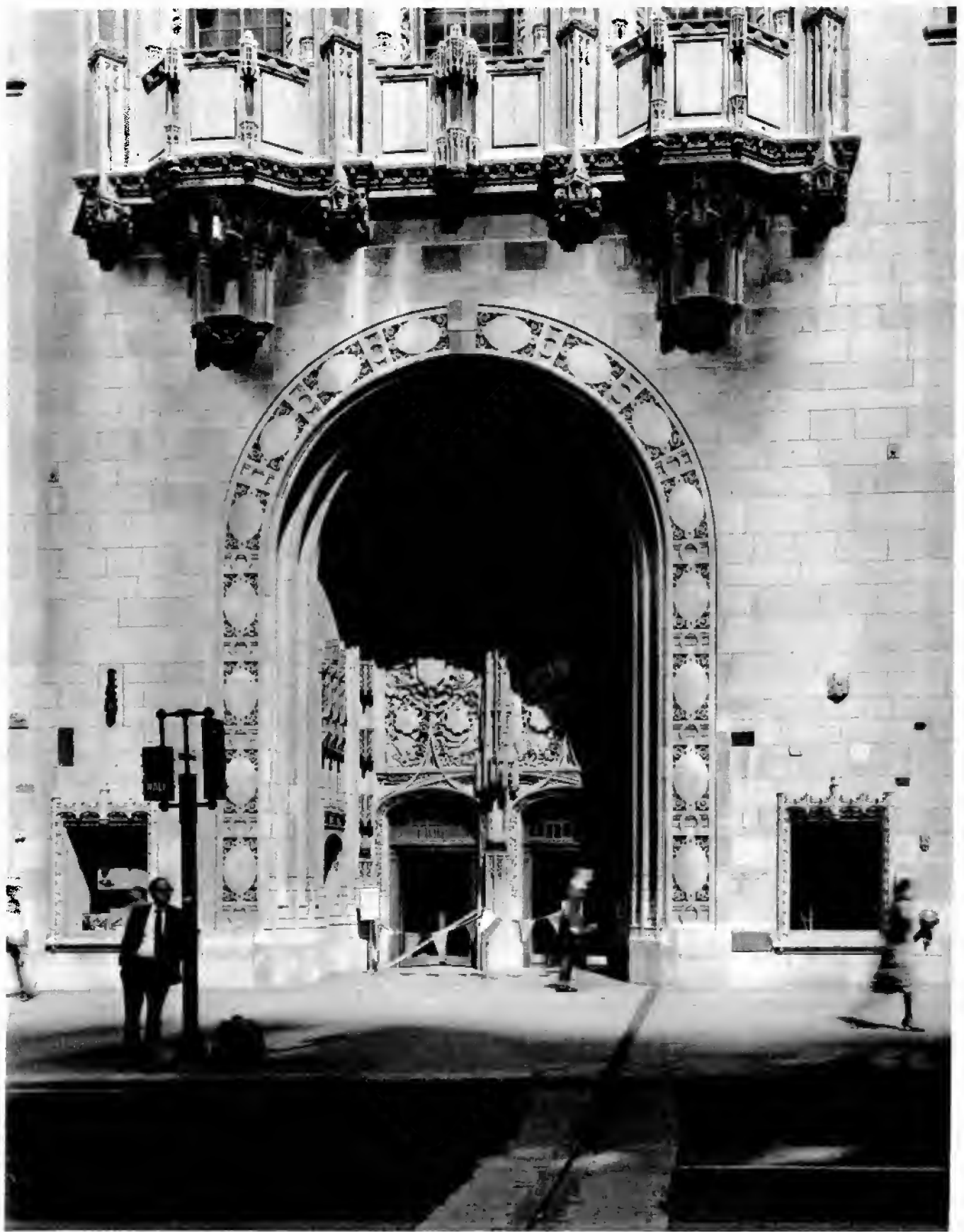
*(Bob Thal, photographer)*



*OPPOSITE;*

The central motif of the three-story ornate arch above the main entrance to the Tribune Tower is maize (Indian corn), depicting our country's agricultural greatness.

*(Bob Tall, photographer)*



*OPPOSITE:*

A balcony of carved oak hangs below a clock affixed to a intricately designed stone screen on the west wall.

*(Bob Thall, photographer)*

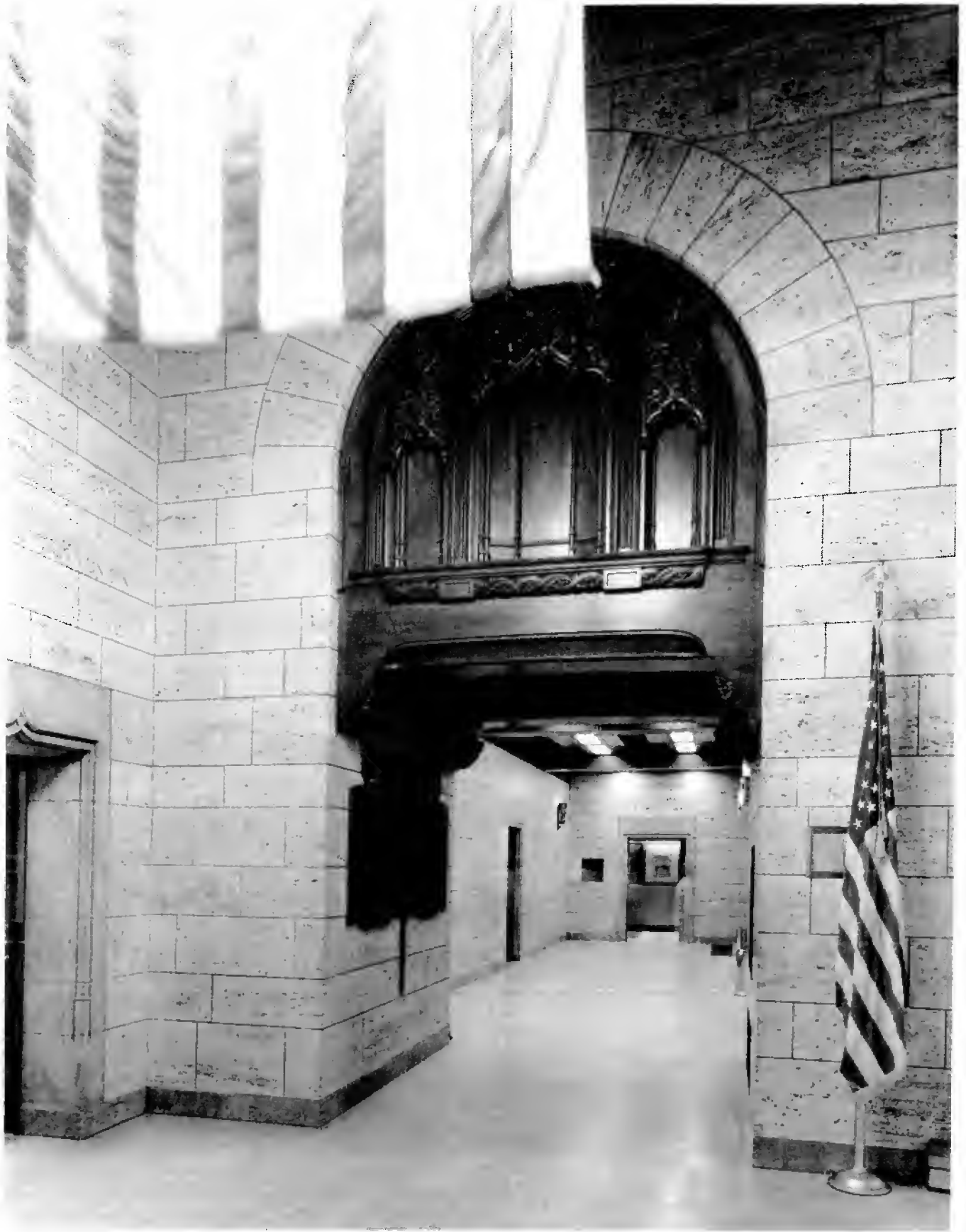




*OPPOSITE:*

The Gothic detailing of the buildings exterior is reproduced in the carved oak panel above the entrances to the elevator halls. The bronze plaque commemorating the Tribune employees who served in World War II is affixed to the north wall below the oak panel.

*(Bob Thall, photographer)*



*OPPOSITE:*

The ornate elevator doors provide a decorative contrast to the plain walls of the elevator hall which are covered with travertine marble. Electricity is symbolized by the oak carving located to the right of the elevator door.

*(Bob Thal, photographer)*

